

Lithuanian victor sees independence by year end

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R. (AP) — The leader of the Sajudis reform movement, whose group claimed a landslide victory in the Soviet Union's first multiparty election, said yesterday that independence for Lithuania could be achieved this year.

In balloting for the Baltic republic's 141-seat parliament Saturday, voters appeared to have chosen the country's first legislature not dominated by Communists.

The main contenders were the Sajudis Popular Front, which has led the drive for independence, and the reformed Lithuanian Communist Party.

Unofficial returns showed that of the 90 races decided, Sajudis-endorsed candidates took 72 seats and non-Sajudis candidates took 18, said Rita Dapkus, head of the Sajudis information agency.

"If that is not a landslide, then what is?" Algimantas Cekuolis, a Sajudis officer, said at a news conference. "It is a very clear indication of what the people of Lithuania think."

Vytautas Landsbergis, Sajudis chairman, said the results showed Lithuanians trust his movement.

"We have a common and very clear goal. Our clear goal is statehood and the independence of Lithuania," he said. "This goal is achievable this year."

Sajudis officials gathered the results by calling local election commissions, and the tallies were believed to be reliable. Official results are expected today.

Dapkus said 45 races had no majority winner and will be decided by runoff elections on March 10, while six were invalidated by insufficient voter turnout or other factors. They will be decided in April.

Turnout among the 2.56 million eligible voters was about 75 percent, officials said.

Sajudis wants talks with Moscow to prepare for an orderly secession, which would break a 50-year-old tie that began with Lithuania's occupation by the Red Army in 1940.

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Obituary